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## Local Church News - November 2012



On October 21, **Brookmeade Congregational UCC** in Nashville voted to call Rev. Richard (Rick) Diekmann as its pastor and teacher. Richard, who comes from Port St. Lucie, FL, last served there as pastor of First Congregational UCC, and has also served as an adjunct faculty member at Yale Divinity School.

**Holy Trinity Community UCC IN Nashville**, held a service of groundbreaking on October 14, 2012, for the expansion of its facility to accommodate growth.

Members have completed a successful capital campaign and secured a loan from the Church Building and Loan Fund of the UCC. Holy Trinity continues to be the most rapidly growing church in the Southeast Conference.

**Kirkwood UCC** in Atlanta to host Hunger Banquet Thursday, Nov. 28, 7-9 p.m. This event is designed to raise awareness around the issues of hunger and food insecurity at the local, national, and global levels. A meal representative of our global food access will be served. Reservations required. Admission is \$10 or 10 non-perishable food items. Join us and see hunger and poverty in a whole new way. Email [hungerbanquet@kirkwooducc.com](mailto:hungerbanquet@kirkwooducc.com) for more information or to register.

On Oct 20th in Nashville, Rev. Kathy Clark was back among SE Conference friends as guest speaker at the **Upper Room UCC** Fellowship's Fall Potluck Supper and 8th anniversary celebration. In her current role with Local Church Ministries of our national UCC offices in Cleveland, Kathy gave a powerpoint presentation: "Overview of National UCC Organization/Ministries & the Role of Prayer". With 53 in attendance, this quarterly potluck gathering of our 4 Nashville area UCC churches is always a wonderful occasion to grow in prayer & meditation and in UCC identity & fellowship!



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The UCC Penn Central Conference minister invites all take a stand against violence and bullying by joining the General Synod 29 Rainbow Scarf Project.

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Rev. Joyce Myers-Brown, member of **Central Congregational UCC**, Atlanta, has been invited to be the preacher at the anniversary celebration of the Sociedade Media Joyce (Joyce Young Adult Society) of our partner church, the Evangelical Congregational Church of Angola. From November 22 through December 13 she will also be visiting a number of local churches and old friends from her years there (1964-1975) as a UCC missionary. She feels blessed to be returning to this much-loved people and church.

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Rev. Dr. Charles R. (Chuck) Traylor, pastor of **Fairfield Glade Community UCC**, Fairfield Glade, TN, has accepted a position with Presbyterian Communities and Services (PC&S) in Irving, TX. His last Sunday will be November 18 and his last official day of service will be November 20.

The Fairfield Glade church is jointly affiliated with the UCC and the Presbyterian Church (USA). The community and church, located in Cumberland County, TN, are predominantly composed of retired people. By custom, the pastorate at Community Church alternates between clergy from the two denominations; Traylor is Presbyterian, so the next called pastor will likely have UCC standing.

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**Church of the Savior UCC**, Roswell, GA, has sold its building and moved out of the facility, located on Old Alabama Road, at the end of October. The church affiliated with the United Church of Christ in 2000, having disaffiliated from the Southern Baptist Convention. During this transition the church secured financing from the Cornerstone Fund of the UCC. The church will seek out another location in which to worship, and is preparing to search for a new pastor following the death of its most recent pastor, Chris Graham, earlier this month.



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Lifting Up... November 2012



A memorial service was held for Christopher T. (Chris) Graham, on October 13. Chris was the pastor of **Church of the Savior UCC**, Roswell, GA, and had served as a UCC minister since 2001. Chris had struggled with ALS for several years. He is survived by his wife, Carol, his children Katie, Taylor, and Drew; and grandchildren Emily, Avery, and Elliot, as well as his mother, sisters, and brothers. He had led Church of the Savior in its journey into the United Church of Christ, following disaffection with the Southern Baptist Convention.

Robin Lee Fitch, a UCC minister and pastoral counselor, and member of **Central Congregational UCC in Atlanta**, fell off a ladder and broke her back over the weekend. Robin had surgery and we ask that you pray for a successful surgery and speedy recovery for Robin.

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## Feature Focus - November 2012



### Members in Discernment Gather in Decatur for Their Semi-Annual Retreat.

On Saturday, October 27, over thirty members in discernment, advisers, pastors, licensed ministers and guests of the Southeast Conference gathered for a day long retreat at the Care and Counseling Center of Georgia in Decatur. Participants came from Tennessee, Alabama as well as Georgia and represented thirteen congregations of the Conference. This is one of the semi-annual gatherings that members in discernment are expected to attend each year of their discernment. The purpose of the gatherings will be to provide guidance through a process that was begun this year that represents a dramatic shift in the process of preparation for ministry in the United Church of Christ.



Tim Downs pointed out that because this is a process that is in formation, the feedback and input of those who are in discernment is essential to the shaping of it. Much of the conversation focused on the shaping of a portfolio which is at the heart of the journey of discernment. Portfolios are organized around the Four Marks of Faithful and Effective Ministry; spiritual foundation, UCC identity, personal and professional formation, and knowledge and skills. Sally Purvis and Laura Arnold led an extended conversation for members in discernment on the shaping of their portfolios.. In a separate meeting with Tim Downs and Christy Bonner, those who are in the process of exploring the discernment process, but have not yet begun it, engaged in a dynamic conversation about the process of discernment. In response to comments that the Marks of Faithful and Effective Ministries were too general, Christy Bonner said, "the Marks do not provide a formula, they do challenge each of us in discernment to be grownups, to evidence a maturity and groundedness of faith. It is a guide to help us find our own voices".

Kirk Lyman-Barner, a member in discernment himself, and a member of the Member in Discernment Committee, led the group in a process of listing ways in which the semi-annual retreats could be more useful to members in discernment. The group listed out opportunities and topics that they would like to have be a part of their formation. There was enthusiasm about the proposal to take a trip to the national headquarters in Cleveland, workshops on appreciative inquiry, family dynamics, and boundary training. Additionally they listed things they never learned in seminary that they thought would be helpful to their formation including; stewardship education, financial management, organizational and administrative development, and time management. The group included candidates seeking all three forms of authorization for ministry: ordination, licensing, and commissioning.

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three forms of authorization for ministry, ordination, licensing, and commissioning.  
The next retreat will take place on March 9.

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## Conference News - November 2012



### Conference Minister Search Committee Begins Its Work

The Search Committee for a new conference minister, chaired by Jen Austin of Holy Trinity Community UCC, Nashville, has begun its work by preparing a conference profile. Members of the search committee reflect the conference in its full diversity and have been elected from churches in all of our associations. The committee includes the following members in addition to the chair: Rodney Franklin, pastor of First Congregational Christian Church, UCC, Birmingham; Lyle Weible, Pleasant Hill Community UCC, TN; Regina Drake, Victory for the World, UCC, Stone Mountain, GA; John Gill, pastor, Church of the Savior, UCC, Knoxville, TN; Joanne Calhoun, Circular Congregational UCC, Charleston, SC; Marvin Morgan, associate minister, First Congregational UCC, Atlanta; Leah Lyman-Waldron, co-pastor, Praxis UCC, Atlanta. Keep alert to continuing news as they meet.

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### Georgia-South Carolina Fall Meeting, October 20, Hosted by Bethany Congregational UCC, Tells Our Stories and Celebrates

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The Georgia-South Carolina Association gathered on Saturday, October 20, in Thomasville, GA, for an ecclesiastical council to share stories, food, and fellowship. At our opening worship we were led by the Evergreen Congregational UCC Men's Chorus, who engaged us with the richness of call-and-response singing.

Brynn White, a member in discernment from Peace Congregational UCC, Clemson, SC, preached her ecclesiastical council sermon, recalling to us that we were worshipping on sacred ground at Bethany Congregational UCC, one of our AMA churches; sacred for the ministries which the AMA supported by bringing the promise of education to the African-American citizens of the area through Allen Normal School, once affiliated with Bethany Church. In ways Brynn, a member of one of our newest churches, represents a bridge from this historic past to a promising future, as our new churches take up the challenge of living out the call to justice

in new ways today. She called on us to hold our vision before us, to let our light shine and not be dimmed.

Following a unanimous vote to approve Brynn for ordination, the association then recognized Artis Johnson, pastor of Evergreen Congregational UCC, Beachton, GA, for his 40 years of ministry in that church. At the time Artis began his ministry, Evergreen UCC was yoked with Bethany UCC, and while they are no longer yoked, they continue to worship together on the final Sunday of five-Sunday months. Artis has served in a number of significant leadership positions in the Conference and the Association, including a term as moderator of the Association.



The Association welcomed its new elected moderator, George Drumbor, of Circular Congregational UCC, Charleston. George succeeds Elizabeth Clement, who has resigned to accept a position in the national setting of the UCC.

Susan Mitchell of the national UCC staff led us in a time of reflection about each of our own stories, and began by bringing greetings from her colleagues in Cleveland. In her reflections she asked herself and each of us whether we would have had the courage of those who shaped the stories of the Amistad and the AMA as it extended its missions across the South. She invited us to share our testimonies. George Drumbor offered a story from Circular Congregational Church of Josiah Smith, a slave who became an abolitionist following his encounter with faith at Circular. Artis Johnson shared a word about the faithfulness of Jesus and invited us to remember that "Jesus is on the main line, tell him what you want." David Templeton, a chaplain from Savannah, spoke of being a recovering racist. John Hoover of Central Congregational UCC, Atlanta, offered reflections about having been raised in a historic peace church, the Church of the Brethren, and stories of his ancestors and their faithfulness. The event ended with a fish fry, hosted by the men of Evergreen Congregational UCC.



Introducing **Board Member at Large, Rev. Lawrence (Larry) E. Calbert, Sr.** Larry graduated from Kentucky State University in Frankfort, KY, with a Bachelor's of Science in Business and a minor in Computer Science. He has taken classes at the Interdenominational Theological Center, Columbia Theological Seminary, and has been engaged in ongoing education and training for ministry. Raised in the Congregational church, he was called to preach in 1977. Larry served in both Baptist and UCC settings, until he was called to serve as pastor of Rush Memorial Congregational UCC in Atlanta in 1989. He has received several honors and awards through the years. He has served as moderator of the Georgia-South Carolina Association, in various positions on the Association's Church and Ministry Committee, and as Disaster Relief

Coordinator for Georgia and South Carolina.

Rev. Calbert and his wife, Beverly, are parents of five adult children, with a son preceding his parents in death, a son-in-law, two daughters-in-law, and thirteen grandchildren and two great-grands.

At a congregational meeting on October 21, **Covenant Community Church** in Center Point, AL, an eastern suburb of Birmingham, voted by a 93 percent margin to affiliate with the United Church of Christ. The church, a nondenominational congregation, has a long history of advocacy for justice and inclusivity in the Birmingham area. Led by the Rev. J. R. Finney, the congregation numbers 300 members and several years ago moved to its current campus in Center Point from inner-city Birmingham. Over the course of the next several months the congregation will continue to explore the United Church of Christ, and will attend meetings of the Conference and the Association, as well as host classes to introduce its leadership to the United Church of Christ and its ministries around the globe. Rev. Finney is in the process of seeking privilege of call in the UCC, and is currently enrolled in the UCC History and Polity class facilitated by Tim Downs.

On December 2, **United Church of Christ of Pensacola**, FL, will hold its first worship service. This will be the second congregation that is a part of a Gulf Coast strategy for the Southeast Conference, Open Table Community of Faith UCC, in Mobile, AL, being the first. The Panhandle of Florida, long dormant in new church development activity, is one of the most promising areas for extending the UCC in our conference. The church's pastor, Patrick Rogers, has been called by the Conference Board of Directors to this ministry. In this conference, new church developers are called by the Conference and their work is considered to be a ministry of the Conference until the church applies to its association to be accepted as a congregation in full standing.

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